

lands which are suitable for timber harvest, provided that big game summer habitat objectives are met.

Management Area 13.—These are areas that contain special habitat characteristics which are allocated as Old-Growth. Local road construction is permitted, providing that they are restricted following use to protect snag characteristics.

Management Area 14.—These are areas that contain productive timber lands which are suitable for timber harvest, provided that grizzly bear habitat objectives are met.

Management Area 15.—These are areas that contain productive timber lands which are suitable for timber harvest while providing for other resource values.

Management Area 17.—These are areas that contain productive timber lands which are suitable for timber harvest while achieving scenery management objectives in major travel routes.

Management Area 19.—These are areas that contain steep slopes requiring only activities which minimize surface disturbance and maintain a health vegetative cover.

The Forest Service will consider a range of alternatives. One of these will be the "No Action" alternative, in which none of the proposed activities will be implemented. Additional alternatives will examine varying levels and locations for the proposed activities to achieve the desired conditions, as well as to respond to the issues and other resource values.

The EIS will analyze the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects of the alternatives. Past, present, and projected activities on National Forest Lands will be considered. The EIS will disclose the analysis of site-specific mitigation measures and their effectiveness.

Public participation is an important part of the analysis. It will start with the initial scoping process (40 CFR 1501.7) which will begin with the publication of the notice. In addition, the public is encouraged to visit with Forest Service officials at any time during the analysis and prior to the decision. The Forest Service will be seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State and local agencies and other individuals or organizations who may be interested in or affected by the Proposed Action. Public meetings are scheduled for February 28th in Troy, Montana, and March 1st at the Upper Ford Work Center on the Kootenai National Forest. Comments from the public and other agencies will be used

in preparation of the Draft EIS. The scoping process will be used to:

1. Identify potential issues.
2. Identify major issues to be analyzed in depth.
3. Eliminate minor issues or those which have been covered by a previous environmental analysis, such as the Kootenai Forest Plan EIS.
4. Identify alternatives to the proposed action.
5. Identify potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and alternatives (i.e. direct, indirect, and cumulative effects).
6. Determine potential cooperating agencies and task assignments.

The principle environmental issues identified to date are related to:

1. Vegetation for wildlife habitat and watershed recovery.
2. Security for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species.
3. Reallocation of designated Old-Growth.
4. Protection of fish habitat and water quality.
5. Sustaining natural processes.
6. Entry into Roadless areas.

Other issues commonly associated with salvage harvesting and road construction include: heritage resources, soils, and scenery management. The list may be verified, expanded, or modified based on public scoping for this proposal.

Consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been ongoing with regard to listed species. The Montana Department of Health and Welfare-Division of Environmental Quality, Montana Department of Fish and Game, and the Kootenai Salish Indian Tribe will also be consulted.

While public participation in this analysis is welcome at any time, comments received within 30 days of the publication of this notice will be especially useful in the preparation of the Draft EIS, which is expected to be filed with the EPA and available for public review in June, 1995. A 45-day comment period will follow publication of a Notice of Availability of the draft EIS in the **Federal Register**. The comments received will be analyzed and considered in preparation of a final EIS, which will be accompanied by a Record of Decision. The final EIS is expected to be filed in September, 1995.

The Forest Service believes it is important at this early stage to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft EIS's must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is

meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 513 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft EIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final EIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir, 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F.Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis., 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this Proposed Action participate by the close of the 30 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments should be as specific as possible. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

I have the final authority for issuing a decision regarding this proposal. I have delegated the responsibility of preparing the EIS to Three Rivers District Ranger, Michael Balboni. My address is Kootenai National Forest, Supervisor's Office, 506 Hwy 2 West, Libby, MT 59923.

Dated: January 30, 1995.

Robert L. Schrenk

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 95-2953 Filed 2-6-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Fall Creek Postfire Project, Payette National Forest, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: In the summer and fall of 1994, the Blackwell Fire covered 56,000 acres of Payette National Forest northeast of McCall, Idaho. The Forest Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the Fall Creek portion of the wildfire area to assess and disclose the environmental effects of a proposal. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove fire-killed and imminently dead timber, recover its economic value and meet socio-economic demands of local communities, reduce fuel loading, reforest the area, and retain and enhance wildlife habitat.

All actions include provisions for snags, dead and down woody debris, visual quality, cultural resources and TES species, and would comply with the Bull Trout Conservation Agreement and PACFISH guidelines for water quality and fisheries.

This project would be accomplished through a salvage sale of burned timber on about 1,000 acres and commercial thinning of about 100 acres of western larch stands, using helicopter logging (no road construction or reconstruction); planting of conifer seedlings; and establishing owl and goshawk nest structures. The salvage sale proceeds would finance the other activities.

The project is approximately three miles northeast of McCall, in the Fall Creek drainage, a tributary to Payette Lake. It lies within the Secesh Roadless Area.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Linda Fitch, McCall District Ranger (208 634-0400); or Chris Brunner, Interdisciplinary Team Leader (208 634-0421).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: From July to October 1994, wildfires covered a total of about 290,000 acres of Payette National Forest. The Blackwell Fire was ignited in early August by lightning strikes three miles northeast of the city of McCall, and eventually covered about 56,000 acres until stopped by winter weather in mid-October. Within this perimeter, it burned in a mosaic pattern of fire intensities including some unburned areas.

In October, Payette National Forest convened three interdisciplinary groups of Forest resource specialists to assess the landscapes affected by the fires: one each for the Blackwell landscape, the Corral landscape, and the Chicken landscape. Each landscape was composed of two or more watersheds. The Blackwell landscape encompassed over 93,000 acres in the Upper North Fork Payette River and Payette Lake watersheds. The Forest also convened a team to assess the broad-scale area, which encompasses the three landscapes plus the Thunderbolt landscape to the south.

In January 1995, each landscape team produced a landscape assessment encompassing their analysis area. The teams used an ecosystem-based approach to assess the fires' effects and to propose target landscape conditions, based on the Forest Plan and the historic range of variation. Each team identified management opportunities that could be implemented this year and in the future to move their postfire landscape toward the target landscape design. The Forest leadership team selected a package of

proposed actions for each landscape to bring forward into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis process.

The Proposed Action for Fall Creek described herein is one product of the Blackwell landscape assessment: it proposes the high-priority short term projects related to timber salvage and other postfire resource opportunities consistent with the target landscape design for the Blackwell landscape.

Burn intensities, as defined by degree of tree mortality, in the Blackwell landscape varied from intensely burned to unburned. Within the Blackwell landscape, which includes portions of both the Blackwell and Corral fires, approximately 29,000 acres burned at high intensity (tree mortality greater than 90%), 12,800 acres at moderate intensity (tree mortality greater than 30% and less than 90%), and 6,400 acres at low intensity (tree mortality less than 30%). The remainder of the landscape did not burn.

An estimated 28,100 acres of the Secesh Roadless Area lie within the Blackwell landscape.

Simultaneous with this Notice of Intent, Payette National Forest is also publishing two Notices of Intent for other postfire proposals. The "Lower South Fork Salmon River Postfire Project" EIS will cover the Chicken landscape, and the "Main Salmon River Postfire Projects" EIS will cover the Corral landscape. The Forest Service will analyze the two projects concurrently with this "Fall Creek Postfire Project" proposal. It will also analyze in an environmental assessment (EA) the "North Fork Payette River Postfire Project" proposal covering another portion of the Blackwell landscape.

Purpose and Need

The need is to move toward the desired future conditions, goals and objectives as described in the Payette Forest Plan and the target landscape design in the Blackwell Landscape Assessment. The Blackwell Landscape Assessment was tiered to the Forest Plan and identifies a strategy to implement the plan in an ecosystem management context. The proposed action is derived from management opportunities in the landscape assessment. The purpose of each element of the proposed action is:

Salvage: To recover economic value of burned timber for counties and timber-related industries and provide wood fiber for society. Past experience with wildfire timber recovery in south-central Idaho indicates that prompt harvest is needed to recover the

economic value of fire-killed trees. The trees in the project area, mostly Douglas-fir, grand fir, and lodgepole pine, are expected to lose an estimated 50% of their economic value by the end of 1996. Part of the salvage sale proceeds will finance the regeneration and wildlife habitat elements of the project.

Thinning: To perpetuate a larch stand for wildlife habitat and reduce fuel loading adjacent to State and private land. This harvest needs to take place concurrently with the salvage due to economic efficiency.

Regeneration: To promptly return to production those lands within the suited base that contribute to the allowable sale quantity.

Wildlife: To replace habitat components lost in the fire.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action has the following components:

1. Salvage harvest fire-killed and imminently dead trees on approximately 1,000 acres. Harvest by helicopter to protect domestic watershed conditions and fish habitat. Construct two helicopter landings; no road construction or reconstruction is proposed. Harvesting would comply with the Draft Bull Trout Conservation Agreement. The proposal would not harvest within PACFISH Riparian Habitat Conservation Areas, which include riparian corridors along perennial and intermittent streams, wetlands, landslides, and landslide prone areas, where riparian-dependent resources receive primary emphasis. Site specific integrated prescriptions to provide for snags/large wood debris, visual quality, cultural resource protection, and TES plant and animal needs would be developed consistent with the Forest Plan, landscape assessment, and current policy/research.

2. Commercially thin unburned western larch stands on 100 acres. Harvest by helicopter only; no road construction or reconstruction is proposed.

3. Regenerate productive forest suited acres within the project area by planting conifer seedlings or ensuring natural regeneration.

4. Construct great gray owl and goshawk nest platforms adjacent to burned areas.

Forest Plan Amendment

Amendment to the Forest Plan may be needed to:

1. Allow plantation stocking levels below Forest Plan standards and guidelines to reflect natural stand conditions.

2. Allow postfire activities as described in the Fall Creek Postfire Project to proceed without on Order 2 soil survey. Soil information of sufficient detail to address NEPA issues and required effects disclosure will be provided.

Preliminary Issues

The Forest Service has identified six preliminary issues raised by the Proposed Action:

1. Effects on water quality in the North Fork Payette River and Payette Lake, which supplies domestic water to McCall. The river is designated a Stream Segment of Concern by the State of Idaho.

2. Effects on fish habitat in the North Fork Payette River and its tributaries, habitat for westslope cutthroat trout and former habitat for bull trout (sensitive species). The North Fork Payette River is a key watershed in the draft Bull Trout Conservation Agreement between Idaho Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Forest Service.

3. Effects on sensitive wildlife species including the boreal owl and three-toed woodpecker.

4. Effects on visual quality as seen from the city of McCall.

5. Effects on wilderness characteristics within the Secesh Roadless Area.

6. The economic efficiency of proposed projects, and effects on socio-economic and social systems around the Payette National Forest.

Possible Alternatives

The Forest Service has identified two alternatives to the Proposed Act: a no action alternative, and an alternative that uses tractor, skyline, and helicopter logging with road construction. As the public raises additional logging with road construction. As the public raises additional issues and provides more information, the Forest may develop additional alternatives.

Decisions To Be Made

The Payette National Forest Supervisor will decide:

Whether to allow salvage logging and/or thinning.

If so, where and how to harvest.

Whether to plant after harvest.

Whether to implement the wildlife projects.

What management requirements and mitigation measures are required as part of the project.

What monitoring requirements are appropriate to evaluate project implementation. And,

What Forest Plan amendment(s) are required.

Public Involvement Meetings

The Forest will hold five public scoping meetings to introduce the Proposed Actions for the three burned landscapes and to invite public comment: Riggins—February 15, 4–9 p.m., City Hall. McCall—February 16, 4–9 p.m., McCall Smokejumper Base. Council—February 21, 4–9 p.m., Council Ranger District office. Boise—February 23, 4–9 p.m., Red Lion Downtowner. Grangeville—February 27, 1–3 p.m., Nez Perce National Forest Supervisor's office. In addition, Forest Service personnel will make added public presentations on request.

Agency/Public Contacts

The Forest is mailing a summary of the Proposed Action, preliminary issues, and background information on the analysis to key individuals, groups, and agencies for comment. The mailing list includes those on the Payette postfire mailing list and those generally interested in Payette National Forest NEPA projects.

Schedule

Draft Environmental Impact Statement, May 1995. Final EIS, August 1995. Implementation, September 1995.

Comments

Comments on the Proposed Action and analysis should be received in writing on or before March 10, 1995. Send comments to: Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, 106 W. Park Street, McCall, ID 83638; telephone (208) 634-0700; FAX (208) 634-0281.

The comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be 45 days from the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions [*Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978)]. Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the Draft Environmental Impact Statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts [*City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1002 (9th Cir.,

1986); and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980)]. Because of these court rulings, it is important that those interested in this Proposed Action participate by the close of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues raised by the Proposed Action, comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Responsible Official

David F. Alexander, Forest Supervisor, Payette National Forest, P.O. Box 1026, 106 West Park, McCall, ID 83638.

Dated: January 31, 1995.

David F. Alexander,

Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 95-2915 Filed 2-6-95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

Main Salmon River Postfire Project, Payette National Forest, Idaho

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: In the summer and fall of 1994, the Corral Fire covered nearly 116,000 acres of Payette National Forest north of McCall, Idaho. The Forest Service intends to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for portions of the wildfire area to assess and disclose the environmental effects of a proposal. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to remove fire-killed and imminently dead timber, recover its economic value and meet socio-economic demands of local communities, reforest the area, retain and enhance wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion and decrease sedimentation, and maintain fish habitat.

All actions include provisions for snags, dead and down woody debris,